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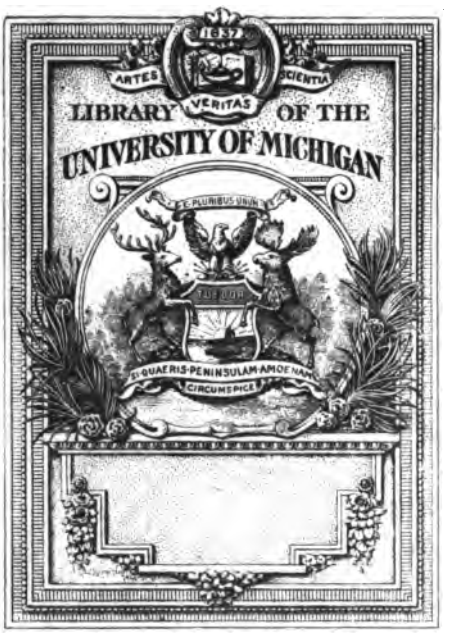
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MANY GODS

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MANY GODS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
MCMX

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PUBLISHED, FEBRUARY, 1910

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TO

FINIS KING FARR

AN OLD

AND DEAR COMRADE

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MANY GODS

"ALL'S WELL"

I

The illimitable leaping of the sea,
The mouthing of his madness to the moon,
The seething of his endless sorcery,
His prophecy no power can attune,
Swept over me as, on the sounding prow
Of a great ship that steered into the stars,
I stood and felt the awe upon my brow
Of death and destiny and all that mars.

II

The wind that blew from Cassiopeia cast
Wanly upon my ear a rune that rung;
The sailor in his eyrie on the mast
Sang an "All's well," that to the spirit clung

Like a lost voice from some aërial realm
Where ships sail on forever to no shore,
Where Time gives Immortality the helm,
And fades like a far phantom from life's door.

III

"And is all well, O Thou Unweariable
Launcher of worlds upon bewildered space,"
Rose in me, "All? or did thy hand grow dull
Building this world that bears a piteous race?
O was it launched too soon or launched too late?
Or can it be a derelict that drifts
Beyond thy ken toward some reef of Fate
On which Oblivion's sand forever shifts?"

IV

The sea grew softer as I questioned — calm
With mystery that like an answer moved,
And from infinity there fell a balm,
The old peace that God *is*, tho all unproved.

The old faith that tho gulfs sidereal stun
The soul, and knowledge drown within their deep,
There is no world that wanders, no not one
Of all the millions, that He does not keep.

THE PROSELYTE RECANTS

(*In Japan*)

Where the fair golden idols
Sit in darkness and in silence
While the temple drum beats solemnly and slow;
Where the tall cryptomerias
Sway in worship round about
And the rain that is falling whispers low;
I can hear strange voices
Of the dead and forgotten,
On the dimly rising incense I can see
The lives I have lived,
And my lives unbegotten,
Namu Amida Butsu pity me!

I was born this karma
Of a mother in Chuzenji,
Where Nantai-zan looks down into the lake;
Where the white-thronged pilgrims
Climb to altars in the clouds
And behold the holy eastern dawn awake.
It was there I wandered
Till a priest of the Christians
With the crucifix he wore compelled my gaze.
In grief I had grown,
So upon its grief I pondered.
Namu Amida Butsu, keep my days!

It was wrong, he told me,
To pray Jiso for my children,
And Binzuru for healing of my ills.
And our gods so many
Were conceived, he said, in sin,
From Lord Shaka to the least upon the hills.

In despair I listened
For my heart beat hopeless,
Not a temple of my land had helped me live.
But alas that day
When I let my soul be christened!
Namu Amida Butsu, O forgive!

For the Christ they gave me
As the only Law and Lotus,
As the only way to Light that will not wane,
May perchance have power
For the people of the West,
But to me he seemed the servitor of pain.
For in pain he perished
As one born to passion:
In some other life no doubt his sin was great,
Tho they told me no,
Those who followed him and cherished.
Namu Amida Butsu, such is fate.

So again to idols
Of the Buddha who is boundless,
While the temple drum is beating thro the rain,
I have turned from treason
Into Meditation's truth,
From the strife the Western god regards as gain.
And if now I'm dying
As the voices tell me,
To the lives that I must live I'll meekly go;
Till my long grief ends
In Nirvana, and my sighing.
Namu Amida Butsu, be it so!

LOVE IN JAPAN

I

Dragon-fly lighting
On the temple-bell,
Whose soul do you bear
On the Day of the Dead?
The soul of my lover?
Ah me, the plighting
Between two hearts
That were never wed!

Dragon-fly, quickly,
The priest is coming!
Oh, the boom
Of the bitter bell!

Now you are gone
And my tears fall thickly.
How of Heaven
Do the gods make Hell!

II

The sêmi is silent
(Autumn rains!)
The wind-bells tinkle
(How chill it is!)
The quick lights come
On the shoji-panes.
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

The maple darkens
(Pale grow I!)
The near night shivers
(The temple fades.)

Haunting love
Will not cease to cry!
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

The wild mists gather
(Ah, my tears!)
The pane-lights vanish
(For some there is rest.)
But for me —
The remembered years!
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

MAPLE LEAVES ON MIYAJIMA

The summer has come,
The summer has gone,
And the maple leaves lift fairy hands
That ripple upon the winds of dawn
Where the dim pagoda stands.
They ripple and beckon yearningly
To their sister fairies over the sea,
But help comes not,
So they fall and flee
From Autumn over the sands.

And down the mountain,
And into the tide,
Some are blown where the sampans glide,
And some are strewn by the temple's side,

And some by the torii.
But Autumn ever
Pursues them till,
As ever before,
She has her will,
And leaves them desolate, dead and still,
Ravished afar and wide;
Leaves them desolate; crying shrill,
"No beauty shall abide!"

TYPHOON

(At Hong-kong)

I was weary and slept on the Peak;
The air clung close like a shroud,
And ever the blue-fly's buzz in my ear
Hung haunting and hot and loud;
I awoke and the sky was dun
With awe and a dread that soon
Went shuddering thro my heart, for I knew
That it meant typhoon! typhoon!

In the harbour below, far down,
The junks like fowl in a flock
Were tossing in wingless terror, or fled
Fluttering in from the shock.
The city, a breathless bend
Of roofs, by the water strewn,

Lay silent and waiting, yet there was none
Within it but said typhoon!

Then it came, like a million winds
Gone mad immeasurably,
A torrid and tortuous tempest stung
By rape of the fair South Sea.
And it swept like a scud escaped
From craters of sun or moon,
And struck as no power of Heaven could,
Or of Hell — typhoon! typhoon!

And the junks were smitten and torn,
The drowning struggled and cried,
Or, dashed on the granite walls of the sea,
In succourless hundreds died.
Till I shut the sight from my eyes
And prayed for my soul to swoon:
If ever I see God's face, let it
Be guiltless of that typhoon!

PENANG

I want to go back to Singapore
  And ship along the Straits,
To a bungalow I know beside Penang;
  Where cocoanut palms along the shore
    Are waving, and the gates
Of Peace shut Sorrow out forevermore.
  I want to go back and hear the surf
    Come beating in at night,
Like the washing of eternity over the dead.
  I want to see dawn fare up and day
    Go down in golden light;
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

I want to go back to Singapore
  And up along the Straits

To the bungalow that waits me by the tide.
Where the Tamil and Malay tell their lore
At evening — and the fates
Have set no soothless canker at life's core.
I want to go back and mend my heart
Beneath the tropic moon,
While the tamarind-tree is whispering thoughts
of sleep.
I want to believe that Earth again
With Heaven is in tune.
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

I want to go back to Singapore
And ship along the Straits
To the bungalow I left upon the strand.
Where the foam of the world grows faint before
It enters, and abates
In meaning as I hear the palm-wind pour.
I want to go back and end my days
Some evening when the Cross

On the southern sky hangs heavily far and sad.
I want to remember when I die
That life elsewhere was loss.
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

WHEN THE WIND IS LOW

(*To A. H. R.*)

When the wind is low, and the sea is soft,
And the far heat-lightning plays
On the rim of the West where dark clouds nest
On a darker bank of haze;
When I lean o'er the rail with you that I love
And gaze to my heart's content;
I know that the heavens are there above —
But you are my firmament.

When the phosphor-stars are thrown from the bow
And the watch climbs up the shroud;
When the dim mast dips as the vessel slips
Thro the foam that seethes aloud;

I know that the years of our life are few,
And fain as a bird to flee,
That time is as brief as a drop of dew —
But you are Eternity.

THE PAGODA SLAVE

(At Shwe Dagohn, in old Rangoon)

All night long the pagoda slave
Hears the wind-bells high in the air
Tinkle with low sweet tongue and grave
    In praise of Lord Gautama.
All night long where the lone spire sends
Its golden height to the starry light
    He hears their tune
    And watches the moon
And fears he shall never reach Nirvana.

Round and round by a hundred shrines
Glittering at the great Shwe's base
Falls the sound of his feet mid lines
    Droned from the sacred Wisdom.

Round and round where the idols gaze
So pitiless on his pained distress
He passes on,
Pale-eyed and wan —
A pariah like the dogs behind him.

Oh, what sin in a life begot
Thousands of lives ago did he sin
That he is now by all forgot,
Even by Lord Gautama?
Oh, what sin, that the lowest shun
His very name as a thing of shame —
A sound to taint
The winds that faint
From the high bells that hear it uttered!

Midnight comes and the hours of morn,
Tapers die and the flowers all
From the most fêted altars: lorn
And desolate is their odour.

Midnight goes, but he watches still
By each cold spire the moon sets fire,
    By every palm
    Whose silvery calm
Pillar and jewelled porch pray under.

Is it dawn that is breaking? . . No,
Only a star that falls in the sea,
Only a wind-bell's louder flow
    Of praise to Lord Gautama.
Faithless dawn! with illusive feet
It comes too late to ease his fate.
    He sinks asleep
    A helpless heap,
Tho for it he may never reach Nirvana.

THE SHIPS OF THE SEA

Into port when the sun was setting
  Rode the ship that bore my love,
Over the breakers wildly fretting,
  Under the skies that shone above.

Down to the beach I ran to meet him;
  He would come as he had said:
And he came — in a sailor's coffin,
    Dead! . . . . . .

O the ships of the sea! the women
  They from all hope but Heaven part!
The tide has nothing now to tell me,
  The breakers only break my heart!

KINCHINJUNGA

(Which is the next highest of mountains)

I

O white Priest of Eternity, around
Whose lofty summit veiling clouds arise
Of the earth's immemorial sacrifice
To Brahma in whose breath all lives and dies;
O Hierarch enrobed in timeless snows,
First-born of Asia whose maternal throes
Seem changed now to a million human woes,
Holy thou art and still! Be so, nor sound
One sigh of all the mystery in thee found.

II

For in this world too much is overclear,
Immortal Ministrant to many lands,
From whose ice-altars flow to fainting sands

Rivers that each libation poured expands.
Too much is known, O Ganges-giving sire;
Thy people fathom life and find it dire,
Thy people fathom death, and, in it, fire
To live again, tho in Illusion's sphere,
Behold concealed as Grief is in a tear.

III

Wherefore continue, still enshrined, thy rites,
Tho dark Thibet, that dread ascetic, falls
In strange austerity, whose trance appals,
Before thee, and a suppliant on thee calls.
Continue still thy silence high and sure,
That something beyond fleeting may endure —
Something that shall forevermore allure
Imagination on to mystic flights
Wherein alone no wing of Evil lights.

IV

Yea, wrap thy awful gulfs and acolytes
Of lifted granite round with reachless snows.

Stand for Eternity while pilgrim rows
Of all the nations envy thy repose.
Ensheath thy swart sublimities, unscaled.
Be that alone on earth which has not failed.
Be that which never yet has yearned or ailed,
But since primeval Power upreared thy heights
Has stood above all deaths and all delights.

V

And tho thy loftier Brother shall be King,
High-priest be thou to Brahma unrevealed,
While thy white sanctity forever sealed
In icy silence leaves desire congealed.
In ghostly ministrations to the sun,
And to the mendicant stars and the moon-nun,
Be holy still, till East to West has run,
And till no sacrificial suffering
On any shrine is left to tell life's sting.

THE BARREN WOMAN

(Benares)

At the burning-ghat, O Kali,
Mother divine and dread,
See, I am waiting with open lips
Over the newly dead.
I am childless and barren; pity
And let me catch the soul
Of him who here on the kindled bier
Pays to Existence toll.

See, by his guileless body
I cook the bread and eat.
Give me the soul he does not need
Now, for conception sweet.
Hear, or my lord and husband
Shall send me from his door

And take to his side a fairer bride
Whose breast shall be less poor.

Oft I have sought thy temples,
By Ganges now I seek,
Where ashes of all the dead are strewn,
And is my prayer not meek?
The ghats and the shrines and the people
That bathe in the holy Stream
Have heard my cry, O goddess high,
Shall I not have my dream?

The women of Oudh and Jaipur
Look on my face with scorn.
Children about their garments cling,
To me shall none be born?
The death-fires quiver faster,
O hasten, goddess, a sign,
That from this doom into my womb
Thy pledge has passed, divine.

Woe! there is naught but ashes,
  Now, and the weepers go.
Lone on the ghat they leave me, lone,
  With but the River's flow.
Kali, I ask not jewels
  Nor justice, beauty nor shrift,
But for the lowest woman's right,
  A child — tho I die of the gift!

BY THE TAJ MAHAL

Under the Indian stars,
Mumtaz Mahal, I am sitting,
Watching them wind their silent way
Over your wistful Tomb;
Watching the crescent prow
Of the moon among them flitting,
Fair as the shallop that bore your soul
To Paradise's Room.

Under the Indian stars,
With palm and peepul about me,
With dome and kiosk and minaret
Mounting against the sky,
I seem to see your face
In all the fairness without me;

In all the sadness that fills my heart
To hear your lover's cry.

Under the Indian stars
I look for your Jasmine Tower,
Along the River whose barren bed
Lies gray beneath the moon.
And thro its magic doors
You seem like a spirit flower,
Wandering back from Allah's bourne
To seek for some lost boon.

Under the Indian stars
I see you softly moving,
Among your jewel-lit maidens there,
A sweet and ghostly queen.
And the scent of attar flung
In your marble font seems proving
That passion never can die from love,
If truly love has been.

Under the Indian stars
He comes, "the Shadow of Allah,"
Jehan, the lord of Magnificence,
The liege who holds your heart.
The silver doors swing back
And alone with him you hallow
The amorous night—whose moon has made
Such visions in me start.

Under the Indian stars—
But the end of all is moaning!
I hear his dying breath that from
Your Tomb shall never die.
For every jasper flower
He set in its dream seems loaning
To Beauty a grief, Mumtaz Mahal,
And unto Fate a sigh.

LOVE'S CYNIC

I

O you poets, ever pretending
  Love is immortal, pipe the truth!
Empty your books of lies, the ending
  Of no passion can be — Youth.
"Heaven," you breathe, "will join the broken?"
  Come, was the Infinite e'er wed,
That He must evermore be thinking
  Of your wedding bed?

II

Pipe the truth! tho it clip the glamour
  Out of your rhymes and rip your dream.
Do you believe words can enamour
  Death and dry up Lethe's stream?

Death? it is but a Sponge that passes,
One the Appeaseless e'er will squeeze
Back into Lethe's flood — whose lasting
Is eternities.

III

"False!" cry you, "and an unbeseeming
Blasphemy!" — Well, look around.
Is it not only in blaspheming
Truth is ever to be found?
Whether it be, one thing I ask you,
Lovers and poets, tell, I pray,
Was there ever a love-oath ended
Ere the Judgment Day?

IV

"O," you answer, "ill is in all things."
But in an ancient lie what's good?
Is it not better just to call things
What they are — not what we would?

When you are clinging to your mistress,
  Love has the face of Eternity.
Cling to her then, but know that Wanting
  Fools the best that be.

V

"Yet her brows and her eyes that murmur
  All the music," you say, "of God!"
Press her lips but a little firmer —
  You will feel that they are — sod.
"But there is living soul beyond them,
  And it is love's till all things end?"
Children alone build Paradises
  With but pence to spend.

VI

"Ai-ho now! that is like the cynic,"
  Pitying runs your poet-smile,
"He has sat at the Devil's clinic
  With some dead love up the while."

Dead or alive are one with passions,
  Under the potent knife of Truth
They will be seen composed of craving —
  And a little ruth.

VII

"Then the world on a lie is living?"
  Many a lie has filled its maw!
"Better illusion tho than giving
  Faith to a fatal loveless Law?"
There is a certain Socratean
  Saying that swine of their ditch are sure;
Yet do they prove by their contentment
  That it will endure?

VIII

Clasp her close! But the truth is in you,
  Tho you have rhymed and rammed it down,
Hid it with honey-words that win you
  Wreaths that you know bedeck the clown.

Kings they will call you and uplifters
Of your kind? Lord save the mark,
That we are still for fire dependent
On so false a spark.

IX

And so fond! for you hold immortal
What has been born a day or two!
"But it was destined?" Ay, your portal
Only has God to heed — and you!
He with his thrice three million thirsting
Worlds in the throes of death and life
Surely has time to spare for choosing
Your behooven wife!

X

By my faith, there is not a creature
Mad as a poet, pants the breeze!
Give him a mistress and he'll preach her
As creation's Masterpiece.

Let him but lean for half an hour
  Over her lips and he will swear
That he would dive thro death unfathomed
  To regain her there.

XI

And believe that his oath is able!
  That there is not in all the sea
Water enough to quench the fable
  Of his soul's intensity.
Yet there was never a rose that blossomed
  And endured beyond its day.
There was never a fire enkindled
  But the great Cold had its way.

XII

"Pessimist," is your mortal answer,
  "Wait till the love-wind pierces you!"
Wait? I have been the veriest dancer
  To it, and, dupe still, would do

Truth to the death — shall I confess it? —
For but a moment on one breast.
Wherefore I add — and Adam bless it! —
Who loves once is like the rest.

IN A TROPICAL GARDEN

(Peradeniya, Ceylon)

I

The sun moves here as a master-mage of nature all day long,
With fingers of heat and light that touch to a mystical growth all things.
The spell of him puts pale Time to sleep, as an opiate strange and strong,
And a waft of his wand, the wind, enchantment brings.

II

The python roots of the rubber-tree where the cobra slips in peace
Are wonders that he has waved from the earth as a presage of his power.

And the giant stems of the bamboo-grass, the pool
astounded, sees,
Are a marvel to keep it still hour after hour.

III

The long lianas that reach in dreamy rout from tree
to tree
Are dazed with the sense of sap that he calls to
the tangle of their sprays.
The scarlet-hearted hibiscus stands entranced and
the torrid bee
Is husht upon its rim, as in amaze

IV

And there the palms, the talipot with its lofty blossom-
spire,
The cocoanut and the slim areca listening await
What sorceries of his trembling rays of equatorial
fire
Will next be laid upon some lesser mate.

V

The river, too, that he winds as a magic circle round the wealth
He has here engendered, has the glide of a serpent lost in trance;
And scents of clove and cinnamon that sip cool from it, in stealth
Pour it upon the air like necromance.

VI

And down where the rain-tree and the rife bread-fruit together lean
Over its flow, and the flying-foxes hanging head to earth
Suddenly drop then flap aloft on large bat-wing, is seen
More of his mazing wizardry in birth.

VII

All day long it is so that his hot hypnotic eye commands

With steady ray; and the earth obedient brings
enchantment forth.
All night long in the humid dark the high-voiced
hyla-bands
Chant of it in chill strain from South to North.

VIII

A wondrous mage, in a land whose dreams are made
reality
As swift as clouds are made when the young
Monsoon is in the South.
A land that is born of the sea and by it destined e'er
to be
Beyond all fear of famishing and drouth.

THE WIND'S WORD

A star that I love,
The sea, and I,
Spake together across the night.
"Have peace," said the star,
"Have power," said the sea,
"Yea!" I answered, "and Fame's delight!"

The wind on his way
To Araby
Paused and listened and sighed and said,
"I passed on the sands
A Pharaoh's tomb:
All these did he have — and he is dead."

THE SHRINE OF SHRINES

There is in Egypt by the ancient Nile
A temple of imperishable stone,
Stupendous, columned, hieroglyphed, and known
To all the world as Faith's supremest shrine.
Half in debris it stands, a granite pile
Gigantic, stayed midway in resurrection,
An awe, an inspiration, a dejection
To all who would the cryptic past divine.
The god of it was Ammon, and a throng
Of worshippers from Thebes the royal-gated
Forever at its fervid pylons waited
While priests poured ever a prophetic song.
And yet this Ammon, who gave Egypt laws,
Is not — and is forgot — and never was!

FROM A FELUCCA

A white tomb in the desert,
An Arab at his prayers
Beside the Nile's dark water,
Where the lone camel fares.
An ibis on the sunset,
A slow shadouf at rest,
And in the caravansary
Low music for the guest.

Above the tawny city
A gleam of minarets,
Resounding the muezzin's
Clear call as the sun sets.
A mystery, a silence,
A breathing of strange balm,
A peace from Allah on the wind
And on the sky his calm.

THE EGYPTIAN WAKES

I woke at night in my eternal tomb
The desert sands had hid a thousand years,
And heard the Nile-crier across the gloom
Calling, "The flood has come! beseech the gods!"
I rose in haste, as one who blindly hears,
And sought the barterers of grain and wine
Culled for the praise and service of divine
Great Isis, by the slave who for her plods.
But as I passed along, woe! what was this,
Strange faces and strange fashions and strange fanes
Standing upon the midnight; Oh, the pains
That swept across my startled thought's abyss!
I moaned. My body crumbled into dust.
And then my soul fled Here — where all souls must.

THE IMAM'S PARABLE

Behold, the wind of the Desert rose,
  Khamsin, in a shroud of sand,
And swept the Libyan waste, across
  To far Somali-land.
His voice was thick with the drouth of death
And smote the earth as a burning breath,
Or as a curse which Allah saith
  Unto a demon-band.

The caravan from the oasis
  Of palm-engirt Kûrkûr
Shuddered and couched in shaken heaps,
  The horror to endure.
Its mighty Sheik, like a soul in Hell
Who longs for the lute of Israfel,

Longed for the trickle of Keneh's well,
Imperishably pure!

Three days he longed, and the wind three days
About him whirled the shroud.
Then did a shrill dawn bring the sun —
And a gaunt vulture-crowd.
A few bleak bones on the Desert still
Lie for the Judgment Day to thrill
Again into life — if Allah will:
Let not your heart be proud.

SONGS OF A SEA-FARER

I

Many are on the sea to-day
  With all sails set.
The tide rolls in a restive gray,
  The wind blows wet.
The gull is weary of his wings,
And I am weary of all things.

Heavy upon me longing lies,
  My sad eyes gaze
Across the leagues that sink and rise
  And sink always.
My life has sunk and risen so,
I'd have it cease awhile to flow.

II

All the winds of the sea weary,
  All the waves of the sea rest,
All the wants of my heart settle
  Softly now in my breast.
All the stars that in heaven anchor,
  Golden buoys of Elysian light,
Send me across the gulf promise
  That I am faring right.

So while clouds that are left lonely
  At the gates of the far West
Wait, so still, for the moon's stiller
  Stealing from her nest,
I am held by a low vesper
  Haunting afar the vague twilight,
Then with my soul at peace whisper
  Hallowedly good-night.

A SONG OF THE SECTS

(In a Jerusalem tavern)

A Latin and Greek, praise God, are we, Armenian and Copt,
And we're all drunk as drunk can be, for we've together sopped.
Not one of us but spits at the creed the others mouth and purr,
But we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Armenian sings

The Copt comes out of Egypt-land and with a braggart face
He'll tell you that his fathers piled the Pyramids in place.

In his Monophysite Christ we set no faith, the blasphemer!
But we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Latin sings

The Greek will curse you if you call his Ikons images,
And damns your soul to Hell — no purgatory, if you please!
About Procession of the Ghost he's prickly as a burr,
But he believes, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Copt sings

Of heretics God leaves unburnt, Armenians are worst,
They will not celebrate the Day, that was for Christ the first.
No wine with water mixed for them, as well mix heathen myrrh —
Or not believe, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Greek sings

The Latin swears his Roman Pope is judge infallible.
Wherefore you may be very sure the Devil from his skull
Will drink a toast unto all liars, who such a lie aver —
Tho they believe, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Four again

A Latin and Greek, praise God, are we, Armenian and Copt,
And we're all drunk as drunk can be, for we've together sopped.
Not one of us but hankers to hang all Jews on a Juniper,
For we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

THE CITY

Soft and fair by the Desert's edge,
  And on the dim blue edge of the sea,
Where white gulls wing all day and fledge
Their young on the high cliff's sandy ledge,
There is a city I have beheld,
Sometime or where, by day or dream,
I know not which, for it seems enspelled
  As I am by its memory.

Pale minarets of the Prophet pierce
  Above it into the white of the skies,
And sails enchanted a thousand years
Flit at its feet while fancy steers.
No face of all its faces to me
Is known — no passion of it or pain.
It is but a city by the sea,
  Enshrined forever beyond my eyes!

VIA AMOROSA

(To A. H. R.)

When we two walk, my love, on the path
  The moon makes over the sea,
To the end of the world where sorrow hath
  An end that is ecstasy,
Should we not think of the other road
  Of wearying dust and stone
Our feet would fare did each but care
  To follow the way alone?

When we two slip at night to the skies
  And find one star that we keep
As a trysting-place to which our eyes
  May lead our souls ere sleep,
Should we not pause for a little space
  And think how many must sigh

Because they gaze over starry ways
With no heart-comrade by?

When we two then lie down to our dreams
That deepen still the delight
Of our wandering where stars and streams
Stray in immortal light,
Should we not grieve with the myriads
From East of earth to West
Who lay them down at night but to drown
The longing for some loved breast?

Ah, yes, for life has a thousand gifts,
But love it is gives life.
Who walks thro his world alone e'er lifts
A soul that is sorrow-rife.
But they to whom it is given to tread
The moon-path and not sink
Can ever say the unhappiest way
Earth has is fair to the brink.

DUSK AT HIROSHIMA

Softly the bamboo bends
As the sun sinks down unglowing,
Softer the willow ends
A sigh to the dusk around.
Quickly the brief bat wends
His flittering way, thro flowing
Fields of the autumn air,
That are husht of the city's sound.

Temple and thatch and stream
Are forgetting the light that lingers,
Mountain and mist in dream
Already are lost, afar.
Faintingly comes the beam
Of the moon—then viewless fingers
Tinkle a samisen,
And astir on the East is a star.

THE WANDERER

When moonlight on the face
Of the great Buddha falls
As he sits in Nirvana
On the shores of Kamakura,
When the pines about him place
Soft shadows at his feet
Like offerings of penitence and tears,
I hear in the grace
Of the wind's low susurra
A voice that calls me still
To my home within the West,
But I've lingered overlong
In the East's strange arcana
And no more is there desire within my breast.

I left it when a boy,
That far home and, alas,

'Twas so fair that my dreaming
Earth had fairer was a madness.
I left it for the joy
Of wandering the world,
And heathen-hearted lands have I beheld!
But when at last cloy
Of delight brought sadness
Like lotus to my veins,
And forgetfulness seemed fate,
I had fared unto this shrine
And the moon as now was beaming,
And here have I awaited — and await.

But not for any gift
Of its god, or any grace
That in living or in dying
Men in text or sutra sigh for.
And not for any shrift
Nirvana has, or skies
Where Paradise imperishably smiles.

But only for the sift
Of the wind, that seems to die for
My soul's enduring peace
In the dwelling of the Tomb.
And only for the drift
Of the moon that comes denying
Eternity to everything but Doom.

IN A SHINTO TEMPLE GARDEN

Under the torii, robed in green,
The old priest creeps to the shrine.
Over the bridge the still stork stands,
The crow caws not in the pine.

Far in the distance bugles blow,
War's bloody memory wakes.
The priest prays on — for his sons that
are dead,
And the heart within him breaks.

FAR FUJIYAMA

Against the phantom gold of failing skies
I see the ghost of Fujiyama rise
And think of the innumerable eyes
  That have beheld its vision sunset-crowned.
The peasant in his field of rice or tea,
The prince in gardens dreaming by the sea,
The priest to whom the sêmi in the tree
  Was but some shrilling soul's incarnate sound.

And as I think upon them, lo, the trance
Of backward time and distant circumstance,
Of Karma's all-remembering necromance,
  Lies suddenly before my boundless sight.
It is as if, a moment, Buddhahood
Were given to me; as if understood
At last were vague Nirvana's vaguer good;
  As if time were dissolved in living light.

ON MIYAJIMA MOUNTAIN

(To A. H. R.)

Out on the sea the sampans ride
  And the mountains brim with mist and sun.
O we are in Japan again
  And the spell is about us spun!
The spell of the old enchanting East,
Of Buddha and many a blissful priest,
The spell that has never, never ceased
    To haunt us!

Glad we behold the temple-tops
  And the lanterns in religious row
Standing, like acolytes of stone,
  Where the pine and camphor grow.
And o'er them the old pagoda prays

Blessing upon their dreaming days,
And upon the eightfold sacred ways
From Sorrow!

Ah, and the torii too is there
Where the tranced sea enters to his shrine
Daily, with tidal mystery
And majesty divine.
He enters now, as the nuptial sea
Of love first entered our hearts, to be
Lord of their tides eternally,
And Master!

OLD AGE

I have heard the wild geese,
  I have seen the leaves fall,
There was frost last night
  On the garden wall.
It is gone to-day
  And I hear the wind call.
  The wind? . . . that is all.

If the swallow will light
  When evening is near;
If the crane will not scream
  Like a soul in fear;
I will think no more
  Of the dying year,
  And the wind, its seer.

ON THE YANG-TSE-KIANG

Down the Yang-tse bat-wing junk
And tatterdemalion sampan glide,
Sails of brown and black and yellow swinging.
Down the Yang-tse bat-wing junks
Fish-eyed and gaudy take the tide,
Forth to the sea in sloth they ride,
The coolies singing.

Off in the field the peasant toils
And along the canal the low tows slip,
Fruit of the red persimmon piled upon them.
Off in the field the peasant toils —
With lip and brow the dull years strip
Bare of the dreams of life, whose grip
Has grimly drawn them.

High on the hill the yamên rests
And the temple beside it sleeps in sun,
Far in the distance faints the city dreary.
High on the hill the yamên rests,
And dun dead shadows o'er it run:
This is the land where Time begun
And now grows weary.

THE SEA-ARMIES

The wild sea-armies led by the wind
Are following in our wake,
White-crested shouting millions moving on.
They have broken their camp of Calm and o'er
The world rebellion make,
With banner of cloud and mist above them drawn.

They have heard the call of infinite Death,
The ordering of his word,
"Arise, go forth and conquer where ye can;
For that is the only law ye know,
Its mandate men have heard,
Let them beware when they your path would span.

"Let them beware, for I am lord
Of all that on earth has name,

And unto you is given most my might.
  Ride on, ye have many a ship to rend,
    And many a mast to maim,
And many a land to lash and soul to fright."

  So on they ride, a ravaging horde,
    From shore to shuddering shore,
Beyond us in the bleak star-buried dawn;
  Nor know that when they have camped again
    And sleep, Life will restore
Unto her world the hope they have withdrawn.

THE CHRISTIAN IN EXILE

(*Mandalay*)

The palms along the old fort wall are paling,
The mountains in the evening light are red,
The moon has dropped into the moat from heaven,
A spell barbaric over all is spread.
But what is that to him, a stranger lonely,
In a land strange to all his faith and dim?
He cares not for old splendours, he would only
Hear on the air a simple Sabbath hymn.

The paddy-birds their snowy flight are taking
From the tall tamarind unto their nest,
The bullock-carts along the road are creaking,
The bugles o'er the wall are sounding rest.

On a calm jetty looking off to Mecca
  Sons of Mahomet watch the low day's rim.
He too is waiting for it — with an echo
  Upon his lips of a believer's hymn.

The red gate-towers rise against the twilight,
  The palace of the heathen king is hid,
The white bridge bent across the moat beside it
  Seems now of all unholinesses rid.
He wishes it were so with all this city
  Whose Buddha-built pagodas skyward swim;
But he can only gaze on them and pity —
  And sing within his heart a Christian hymn.

THE PARSEE WOMAN

(At Bombay)

Cast me out from among you,
I will not see my child
Laid aloft where the vultures
May clamour for him, wild!
The earth you say is holy,
Not to be soiled by death,
And a Parsee still should hold divine
What Zoroaster saith.

Ay, and so I will hold it,
But see his pale sweet face,
As pure as the palest flower
Left dead in Spring's embrace.
The sun we worship daily
Shrined it for seven years,

Then shall it go to cruel beaks,
  There where the sea-wind veers?

No, no, no! tho you send me
  A beggar from your door,
You, my lord, whom I honour,
  And you, his sisters four,
To whom there have come no children
  To make your bosoms feel
How even a thought so full of throe
  Can make my sick brain reel.

Ah, you are deaf? you scorn me
  And loathe, as a thing defiled?
My lord, I am but a woman
  Who longs to see her child
Laid in a tomb, entreasured
  Under the shrouding sod.
O would I had never given birth,
  Or that earth had no God!

SHAH JEHAN TO MUMTAZ MAHAL

I see as in a pale mirage
The palm that o'er you sways,
The waters of the Jumna wan are beating.
One pearl-cloud, like a far-off Taj,
A dome of grief betrays —
Its beauty as was yours will be too fleeting!

The world is wider than I knew
Now that your face is gone!
While you were here no destiny seemed boundless.
So I am lost and find no clue
To any dusk or dawn!
Life has become a quest decayed and groundless.

Come back! come back or let me find
The jungle leads at last

Unto your lips and bosom recreated!
O somewhere I again must wind
My arms about you, cast
Into one word my love all unabated!

PRINCESS JEHANARA

Where the road leads from Delhi to the South,
And dingy camel-trains creep in the dust
Past ruin-heaps of old Firozabad
And Indropat unpitied of the drouth;
By a lone tree, above a Pool whose sad
Prayer-water all the turban-people trust,
Is a heat-hidden tomb, and on it just
A few faint blades of bent and grieving grass.
"Jehanara's it is," with ready mouth
A Moslem tells the stranger, "once she said,
'The covering of the poor is only grass,
Let it be mine alone when I am dead.' "
And who has stood there, where about her Rest
Rise high Imperial tombs, knows hers is best.

A SINGHALESE LOVE LAMENT

As the cocoanut-palm
That pines, my love,
Away from the sound
Of the planter's voice,
Am I, for I hear
No more resound
Your song by the pearl-strewn sea!
The sun may come
And the moon wax round,
And in its beam
My mates may rejoice,
But I feast not
And my heart is dumb,
As I long, O long, for thee!

In the jungle-deeps,
  Where the cobra creeps,
The leopard lies
  In wait for me.
But O, my love,
  When the daylight dies
There is more to my dread than he!
Harsh lonely tears
  That assail my eyes
Are worse to bear,
  For the misery
That makes them well
  Is the long, long years
That I moan away from thee!

O again, again,
  In my katamaran
A-keel would I push
  To your palmy door!
Again would I hear
  The heave and hush

Of your song by the plantain-tree.
But far away
Do I toil and crush
The hopes that arise
At my sick heart's core.
For never near
Does it come, the day
That draws me again to thee!

ON THE ARABIAN GULF

From a far minaret of faithful cloud
A wraith-muezzin of the sunset cried
Over the sea that swung with sultan pride,
"Allah is Beauty, there is none beside!
Allah is Beauty, not to be denied
By Death or any Infidel dark-browed!"

And every wave that worshipped, every one
Under the mosque of heaven arching high,
Lifted a white crest with assenting sigh
And answered, "Let all gods but Allah die,
Yea, let all gods! until the world shall cry,
Beauty alone is left under the sun!"

THE RAMESSID

Upon an image of immortal stone,
Seated and vast, the moon of Luxor falls,
Lending to it a stillness that appals,
A mystery Osirian and strange.
The hands outplaced upon the knees in lone
And placid majesty reveal the power
Of Egypt in her most triumphal hour,
The calm of tyranny that cannot change.
It is of that Great king, who heard the cries
Of millions toil to lift him to the skies,
Who saw them perish at their task like flies,
Yet let no eye of pity o'er them range.
What rue, then, if his desecrated face
Rots now at Cairo in a mummy case?

IMMORTAL FOES

At Bedrashein between the pyramids
I saw the wingèd sun fold up his pinions
And sink into the nether world's dominions
Where Set sent ill on the Egyptian dead.
I saw the ancient Desert, that outbids
The Nile for the date-lands between them spread,
Fling over Memphis that is vanishèd,
Another shroud of sand, then bid his minions,
The winds, lie down upon their boundless bed.

I saw where temples vowed to Serapis
And granite splendours men name Pharaonic
Are kept by Time in silence and sardonic
Concealment — mummied in deep mystic tombs.

And when the stars came out in quiet bliss,
I heard Eternity with all its dooms,
Past and to come, sound softly the mnemonic
Of Death who waits all worlds that Life enwombs.

THE CONSCRIPT

The camel at the old sakiyeh
  Toils around and round.
Aweary is he of the Nile
  And of the wailing sound
Of the slow wheel he turns all day
To lift the water on its way
Over the fields of Ahmed Bey,
  That with green grain abound.

Aweary is he, too, of fellàheen
  Who compel him on,
With thick-voiced chanting till the day
  Over the West has gone.
For the bold Desert was he made,
The Bedouin, his lord, to aid,

Not for this peasant wheel of trade
That ever must be drawn.

But on he toils while dahabiyeh
And dark felucca glide
Below him on the glassy flow
Of the gray river's tide.
Then when the night has come lies down,
In sleep the servile day to drown —
Like all whom Life turns with a frown
From their true fate aside.

NAVIS IGNOTA

Lord, what ship goes forth to-day?
I see her setting West.
Shall she have thy winds aright,
Stars to guide her with their light,
Shall she sweep the seas to sight
Of land and harbour-rest?

Awful is thy ocean-wrath,
And none can chart thy shoals,
When storm unassuaging hath
Blotted sun and planet-path.
Shall she, Lord, escape the scath
And live, with all her souls?

For it is a beauteous thing
That ships should sail the sea.

Splendid is their plunge and swing
Into waves that foam and fling
Maelstroms at their bows to bring
  Them down to destiny.

And she, too, courageous rides
  Away into the gloom.
Now her lights are lost in tides
Of the windy spray that glides
Thro the darkness, Lord, abides
  Thy Dove with her — or Doom?

I shall know perhaps some day,
  Or, knowing not, recall
How my heart was fain to pray
For a ship that bravely lay
To her task: O Lord, so may
  Each vessel of us all!

THE CROSS OF THE SEPULCHRE

Within the Holy Sepulchre, breast-high,
There is a cross uncounted lips have kissed,
Millions the world to dust has long dismissed,
Millions that now hope of it but to die.
Pilgrims, I saw, from out far fervid lands
Of superstition, North and West and South,
Bend to it each a trembling, reverent mouth,
Then kneel where Christ was said to loose
Death's bands.
And then I wondered if He who believed
In the One God were wounded sore by this,
Whether He shrinks at each ecstatic kiss,
Or knowing how humanity is grieved,
Knows too that it is better to give Hope
Than Truth, if only one is in man's scope.

THE NUN

A lone palm leans in the moonlight
  Over a convent wall.
The sea below is waking and breaking
  With quiet heave and fall.
A young nun sits at the window;
  For Heaven she is too fair;
Yet even the Dove of God might nest
  In her bosom beating there.

A lone ship sails from the harbour:
  Whom does it bear away?
Her lover who sin-hearted has parted
  And left her but to pray?
She has no lover, nor ever
  Has heard afar love's sigh.

Only the convent's vesper vow
  Has ever dimmed her eye.

For naught knows she of her beauty,
  More than the palm of its peace;
And who beyond Christ's portal to mortal
  Desires would bend her knees?
The ways of the World have flowers,
  And any who will pluck those;
But let there ever be a place
  Where none may pluck God's rose.

ALPINE CHANT

I'm tramping thro the mountains,
They are rising white around me,
Snow peaks like patriarchs
  That Winter has enthroned.
I'm tramping up the valleys
Where the cataracts sound me
Thunders they have shrilly
  From eternity intoned.

I'm tramping thro the mountains,
With the clouds for my companions,
Soft clouds that float and cling
  From crag to cloven crag.
I'm passing by the chalets
That o'erhang the high cañons,

Passing where the shepherds
And the flocks they pipe to lag.

I'm tramping thro the mountains
Where the pines in proud procession
Climb like a hardy host
To halo-heights of sun.
I'm listening for the sallies
Of the avalanche's Hessian
Hurl of ice and granite
Into gulfs Avernian.

I'm tramping thro the mountains
And the wind is yodling to me
Yearnings of the glaciers
To flow to summer lands.
I'm treading up the valleys
With no wanting to undo me —
For to-day I'm goalless
And the great God understands!

THE MAN OF MIGHT

No moment drooped between his thought and action,
No morrow died between his dream and deed.
Within his soul there was no fatal faction
That could betray him in his hour of need.

IN TIME OF AWE

The fierce sea-sunset over the world
  Springs like a wounded spirit,
The waves all day have hissed and hurled
Their fangs and the spray has swept and swirled,
And ships in the gray gale's lair have furled
  Their sails — well may they fear it!

The night will be but a monstrous seethe
  Of terrors elemental.
The clouds will wrap in a ghastly wreath
Of gloom the winds that in them breathe,
And all that lives in the sea beneath
  By fear shall be made gentle;

And sink down, down to the nether deeps,
  Below the foam and fretting.

Down where the sullen water sleeps
Alway and the slow sand coldly creeps
Over the lone wreck, which Death keeps
To guard him 'gainst forgetting.

And there in the ominous vast calm
They'll harbour, like enchanted
Chill shapes he has strangely conjured from
The silence of his masterdom;
There float till again they feel the qualm
Of hunger thro them panted.

And then once more far up will they spring,
To drift and sport and plunder,
Shark, eel and whale and devil-thing,
With tooth to rend and tail to sting.
To the sea, O God, does horror cling
And haunting past all wonder.

SUNRISE IN UTAH

The dun sand-cliffs that break the desert's sea
Rose suddenly upon my sight at dawn,
And terrible in an eternity
Of death took silently the sunrise on.
Purple funereal from rifted skies
Swept down across their proud sterility,
Only to die as here all glory dies,
On barrenness I did not dream could be.
O God, for a bird-song! or opening lips
Of but one flower upon the fatal air,
For but the voice of water as it drips,
Or stir of leaves the day-wind makes aware!
O God, for these, for life! or from the face
Of the world wipe so irreparable a place!

CONSOLATION

I

Come to me, shadows, down the hill,
Lie softly at my feet.
The sun has worked his will
And the day is done.
Come to me softly and distil
Your dews and dreams, that heat
And hours of heartless glare have overrun.

II

Come to me, shadows, down the hill
And bring with you the night,
Fire-flies and the whippoorwill
And ah, the moon —

Whose soft interpretings can still
The tangled tongues of right
And wrong, and hope and fear, that haunt
the noon.

III

Come to me, shadows, down the hill —
And let there follow Sleep,
Which is God's tidal Will
That overflows
The world — obliterating ill,
And in its soothing sweep
Murmuring more of mercy than man
knows.

WAVES

The evening sails come home
With twilight in their wings.
The harbour-light across the gloam
Springs;
The wind sings.

The waves begin to tell
The sea's night-sorrow o'er,
Weaving within their ancient spell
More
Than earth's lore.

The rising moon wafts strange
Low lures across the tide,
On which my dim thoughts seem to range,
Stride
Upon stride,

Until, with flooding thrill,
They seem at last to blend
With waves that from the Eternal Will
Wend,
Without end.

VIS ULTIMA

There is no day but leads me to
  A peak impossible to scale,
  A task at which my hands must fail,
  A sea I cannot swim or sail.
There is no night I suffer thro
  But Destiny rules stern and pale:
And yet what I am meant to do
  I will do, ere Death drop his veil.

And it shall be no little thing,
  Tho to oblivion it fall,
  For I shall strive to it thro all
  That can imperil or appal.

So at each morning's trumpet-ring
  I mount again, less slave and thrall,
And at the barriers gladly fling
  A fortitude that scorns to crawl.

MEREDITH

What am I reading? He is dead?
He the great interpreter
And seer — England's noblest head?
What am I reading? It is hushed?
The deepest voice that life had found
To read a century profound
With all time's seethe and stir?

Why, it is but a scanty score
Of days, since, at his side,
Clasping his hand with more than pride,
I felt that the immortal tide
Of his great mind would long break o'er
The cold command of Death.
Still in my ear is echoing